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Miscellaneous works Of The Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl Of Chesterfield

Consisting Of Letters to his Friends, never before printed, And Various
Other Articles

**Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope of
Dublin, 1777**

Mr. Pitt.

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He was a most disagreeable speaker in parliament, inelegant in his language, hesitating and ungraceful in his elocution, but skilful in discerning the temper of the house, and in knowing when and how to press or to yield.

A constant good-humour and seeming frankness made him a welcome companion in social life, and in all domestic relations he was good-natured.

As he advanced in life, his ambition became subservient to his avarice. His early profusion and dissipation had made him feel the many inconveniencies of want, and, as it often happens, carried him to the contrary and worse extreme of corruption and rapine. *Rem, quocunque modo rem* became his maxim, which he observed (I will not say religiously and scrupulously) but invariably and shamefully.

He had not the least notion of, or regard for, the public good or the constitution, but despised those cares, as the objects of narrow minds, or the pretences of interested ones. And he lived, as Brutus died, calling *Virtue only a name.*

MR. P I T T.

MR. P I T T owed his rise to the most considerable posts and power in this kingdom, singly to his own abilities. In him they supplied the want of birth and fortune, which latter, in others, too often supply the want of the former. He was a younger brother of a very new family, and his fortune was only an annuity of one hundred pounds a year.

The army was his original destination, and a cornetcy of horse his first and only commission in it. Thus unassisted by favour or fortune, he had no powerful protector to introduce him into business, and (if I may use that expression) to do the honors of his parts---but their own strength was fully sufficient.

His constitution refused him the usual pleasures, and his genius forbid him the idle dissipations, of youth, for so early as at the age of sixteen he was the martyr of an
hereditary

hereditary gout. He therefore employed the leisure which that tedious and painful distemper either procured or allowed him in acquiring a great fund of premature and useful knowledge. Thus by the unaccountable relation of causes and effects, what seemed the greatest misfortune of his life was perhaps the principal cause of its splendor.

His private life was stained by no vice, nor sullied by any meanness. All his sentiments were liberal and elevated. His ruling passion was an unbounded ambition, which when supported by great abilities, and crowned with great success, make what the world calls a Great Man.

He was haughty, imperious, impatient of contradiction, and overbearing—qualities which too often accompany, but always clog, great ones.

He had manners and address, but one might discern through them too great a consciousness of his own superior talents.

He was a most agreeable and lively companion in social life, and had such a versatility of wit, that he could adapt it to all sorts of conversation. He had also a most happy turn to poetry; but he seldom indulged, and seldom avowed it.

He came young into Parliament, and upon that great theatre he soon equalled the oldest and the ablest actors. His eloquence was of every kind, and he excelled in the argumentative, as well in the declamatory way. But his invectives were terrible, and uttered with such energy of diction, and such dignity of action and countenance, that he intimidated those who were the most willing and the best able to encounter him.* Their arms fell out of their hands, and they shrunk under the ascendant which his genius gained over their's.

In that Assembly, where public good is so much talked of, and private interest singly pursued, he set out with acting the patriot, and performed that part so ably, that he was adopted by the public as their chief, or rather their only unsuspected, champion.

* Hume Campbell and Lord Mansfield.

The weight of his popularity and his universally acknowledged abilities obtruded him upon King George the second, to whom he was personally obnoxious. He was made Secretary of State. In this difficult and delicate situation, which one would have thought must have reduced either the patriot, or the minister, to a decisive option, he managed with such ability, that while he served the King more effectually in his most unwarrantable electoral views than any former minister, however willing, had dared to do, he still preserved all his credit and popularity with the public, whom he assured and convinced that the protection and defence of Hanover with an army of seventy-five thousand men in British pay, was the only possible method of securing our possessions or acquisitions in North America---So much easier is it to deceive than to undeceive mankind.

His own disinterestedness, and even contempt of money, smoothed his way to power, and prevented or silenced a great share of that envy which commonly attends it. Most men think that they have an equal natural right to riches, and equal abilities to make a proper use of them, but not very many of them have the impudence to think themselves qualified for power.

Upon the whole he will make a great and shining figure in the annals of this country; notwithstanding the blot which his acceptance of three thousand pounds per annum pension for three lives, upon his voluntary resignation of the Seals, in the first year of the present King, must make in his character, especially as to the disinterested part of it.---However it must be acknowledged, that he had those qualities which none but a Great Man can have, with a mixture of some of those failings, which are the common lot of wretched and imperfect human nature.

EXTRACTS